

CHAPTER 6: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element contains goals and policies regarding how Des Moines parks, recreational facilities, and open space will be acquired, designed, managed, and programmed. The City parks system contains ~~28-43~~ parks totaling ~~194.66~~²²¹ acres of park land and ~~4.65-4.8~~ miles of trails. These are made up of conservancy and open space, mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, special/waterfront parks, trails, pathways, streetscapes and ROWs, and Interlocal City/School District facilities.

The goals and policies in this element are taken from, and must be consistent with, the City's Parks, Recreation, and Senior Services Master Plan also known as the ~~PRO-PRSS~~ Plan. That plan was last updated and adopted in 2022, and is typically revised every six years, ~~which is required by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to remain eligible~~ maintain eligibility for grant funding through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). This element also connects and supports other comprehensive plan elements, such as the Land Use Element (through discussion of quality of life and public health), Transportation Element (through the discussion of trails, bikeways, and paths), the Environment & Conservation Element (through the objectives on water conservation and recycling), and the Healthy Des Moines Element (through the discussion of healthy eating and active living).

Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's framework for sustainability and healthy communities, this element plays an important role in promoting good public health. ~~Park, waterfront, and recreation facilities provide opportunities for physical activity through the use of park~~ and waterfront infrastructure, multi-use trails, and athletic fields. ~~Furthermore, and~~ participation in a broad array recreation activities, programs, and services ~~can counter~~ countering national trends toward physical inactivity and obesity. Studies have also shown that use of park spaces and recreation activities can provide mental health benefits, including reduction of depression and anxiety.

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PARKS, RECREATION AND SENIOR SERVICES MASTER PLAN

Background information for this element is found in the Parks, Recreation and Senior Services Master Plan (~~2016~~2022) which includes estimates of demand for parks, a needs assessment, as well as a discussion about opportunities to coordinate with other jurisdictions to provide parks, recreation, senior services, human services, health and wellness, cultural arts, historic preservation, tourism and aquatics to residents within Des Moines and from around the region. Refer to Sections 1 through 3 of the Master Plan for this information.

ADA TRANSITION PLAN

In March 2019, Council adopted an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan.- This plan covers a variety of topics to ensure a more accessible city, including upgrading parks and recreation facilities. This resolution and Transition Plan shows a commitment to goals in the Comprehensive Plan such as PR 6.2.2: "provide for inclusive recreation opportunities to meet the needs of special populations including those who are economically disadvantaged, physically challenged, and developmentally disabled in park facility planning, design, and program services, when feasible."

GOALS

- Goal PR 1** Strive to ~~P~~provide adequate and accessible park and recreation facilities that meet the diverse interests and needs of people of all ages, income levels, cultural or educational backgrounds, or physical abilities. Such recreational facilities should satisfy outdoor, indoor, active, and passive recreational needs and be equitably distributed throughout the community. Ensure the orderly and comprehensive planning of parkland, recreational, and cultural resources through design standards, site planning, and *Master Plan* procedures. Such procedures should respond to public need and service area requirements for park and recreation services.
- Goal PR 2** Identify and protect when feasible -open space, waterfront, park, and recreation areas and consider restoration when feasible of structures of local significance (e.g., cultural, historical, environmental, natural, wildlife, waterfront, tidal, special use, or other).
- Goal PR 3** Provide, ~~as~~ when required by State law, improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Chapter 3: Transportation Element.
- Goal PR 4** Combine new park facilities with adjacent waterfront, recreational, open space, public art, and historically significant locations, municipal facilities, pedestrian/ bicycle transportation systems, school and human services, and other appropriate areas or construction projects as feasible. Joint use of such recreation areas should be

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encouraged. Design and development of such projects should be coordinated with the Parks, Recreation, and Senior Services Department as part of the building permit process.

- Goal PR 5** Maintain existing park, waterfront, and recreation facilities in a sustainable, safe, and accessible manner in perpetuity as feasible. Encourage the State of Washington to maintain and preserve in a sustainable manner its parkland located within Des Moines in perpetuity.
- Goal PR 6** Enhance and maintain a variety of inclusive recreation, senior, wellness, and cultural programs, events, and services where feasible. Actively work to provide adequate recreation programs and service for underserved populations.
- Goal PR 7** Support economic development through design and placemaking by providing: city gateways, public art, and wayfinding signage to recreational, historical, and waterfront facilities; well-maintained streetscapes; adequate parking at recreational facilities; and improving and maintaining recreational, historical, and waterfront facilities.
- Goal PR 8** Establish human services policies that make it possible for residents to live with dignity, ~~and purpose,~~ and prevent homelessness.
- Goal PR 9** Establish arts and culture policies which celebrate cultural enrichment, diversity, accessibility, and the visibility of the arts.
- Goal PR 10** Promote and enhance Citywide ~~standards-~~policies for healthy eating and active living.
- Goal PR 11** Pursue additional funding for Parks and Facilities improvements, ~~from all potential sources.~~

POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Parks, Land Use, and Facility Improvements

- PR 1.1** **Develop and maintain procedures and priorities for the selection, classification, and acquisition of parklands and the use of such lands for recreation purposes. All lands designated for recreation purposes ~~shall~~ should be suitable for the intended recreational activity.**

PR 1.1.1 Work with other entities and public agencies (Highline and Federal Way School Districts, Highline College, State Parks and Utility and Junior Taxing Districts) to maximize opportunities for acquisition of land that qualifies for the City's park system through Interlocal agreements, land transfers, lease, property exchange, dedication, and surplus or easement land acquisition procedures as feasible.

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PR 1.1.2 Utilize the resources of national, regional, and local conservation organizations, corporations, non-profit associations, and benevolent entities to identify and acquire environmentally sensitive land, urban wildlife habitat, or preservation areas, [when feasible](#).

PR 1.1.3 Identify lands that enhance the appearance and character of the City. Such lands may serve as community or neighborhood connectors, create gateway features into Des Moines, enhance the park system, preserve local history, or link existing natural or built amenities.

PR 1.1.4 [Strive to ensure](#) that the quantity and quality of parkland increases and is located proportionately [with by population, growth](#), and the new acquisition reflects the community's recreational, health, and cultural needs. Des Moines should use a variety of means to provide recreational opportunities.

PR 1.1.5 Ensure that proposed land use and transportation facilities that would subject locally significant parks, trails, and conservation resources, historic buildings or districts, recreation and sports facilities to exterior noise exposure levels that exceed limits identified in the DMMC mitigated [to the extent feasible, as required by law](#), commensurate with the magnitude of adverse impact anticipated.

PR 1.1.6 Transfer derelict land, easements, tax delinquent land, surplus roadway/highway rights-of-way, and other land not presently in productive to recreation or open space purposes where such land can be used for land exchange, purchase, or long-term leases to increase City parkland, [if feasible](#).

PR 1.1.7 Maximize the use of lands associated with surface water management and other public utilities to meet recreation and conservation needs.

PR 1.1.8 Enforce regulations for new residential, business, commercial, or industrial development and redevelopment that require either the dedication of parklands, provision of recreation facilities, and/or payment of impact fees and fees in lieu of land to a park and recreation trust fund.

PR 1.1.9 Ensure park and facility design meets the DMMC or recognized standards for access, safety, environmental sustainability, health and protection of humans, domestic animals, wildlife, and tidal life. Park development ~~should~~ be of high quality and aesthetically pleasing, sensitive to the opportunities or constraints of the natural, physical, or architectural environment.

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PR 1.1.10 Consider community recreational needs during planning stages of all single family, multifamily, subdivisions, and planned unit residential developments; retail, commercial, and business park development; educational institutions, utilities, and other governmental facilities development.

PR 1.1.11 Provide barrier-free access by modifying existing facilities when designing and/or constructing [as appropriate](#).

PR 1.1.12 Provide basic amenities at recreation and open space facilities including restrooms, lighting, seating, public art, drinking fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, bicycle racks, shelters, signage, and parking as appropriate and as required by code.

PR 1.1.13 Connect recreational facilities by linear open spaces, pedestrian paths, or bicycle routes [where feasible](#).

PR 1.1.14 Actively seek joint-development and programming opportunities with intergovernmental and private partners and the application of reasonable standards and conditions for such use.

PR 1.1.15 Encourage and support development of local neighborhood and community-based programs for park improvements, including participation of civic clubs, non-profit organizations, neighborhoods, schools, churches, businesses, and other organized volunteer groups.

PR 1.1.16 Establish sustainable park and facility design and construction and historic preservation practices that result in facilities that are high-performing, good for the environment, healthy, and culturally enriching for park visitors and building occupants.

PR 1.1.17 Protect existing and planned park, waterfront, and recreation resources from adverse impacts associated with incompatible land uses and/or transportation activities through regulatory compliance [as appropriate](#). Adverse impacts may include traffic congestion, inadequate parking, surface water runoff, vibration, air, water, and noise pollution.

Open Space, Cultural, and Locally Significant and Historic Resources

PR 2.1 Conserve open space, natural, and cultural resources.

PR 2.1.1 Coordinate and maintain procedures for conserving open space through measures such as zoning, land donation, purchase of easements, conservation easements, coordinated planning, taxing, and management actions [where feasible](#).

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PR 2.1.2 Work with conservation groups and the private sector to acquire, conserve, and manage natural open space areas and other recreational land through donations, sale of land, and recreation or conservation easements.

PR 2.1.3 Preserve significant critical areas as passive open space [where feasible](#). The City may construct improvements that enhance the public's awareness of, and appreciation for, natural areas.

PR 2.1.4 Provide and sustain a healthy urban forest, in alignment with the Green Des Moines Partnership Urban Forest Enhancement Plan [as appropriate](#). Pursue opportunities, either through City-led initiatives or partnering with nonprofit organizations and private entities, to restore native vegetation and plant and maintain trees in City-owned parks and open spaces [when feasible](#).

PR 2.2 Provide appropriate and responsive historic preservation of City owned historic or archeological property through specific planning.

PR 2.2.1 ~~A~~The Historic Preservation Commission ~~should~~~~will~~ represent the interest of the City in matters of historic and archaeological preservation and keep the City Council informed on all such related matters.

PR 2.2.2 A building, site, zone, structure, or object may be designated a City historic or archeological property of local significance if:

1. It is listed ~~or eligible for listing~~ in the King County, State, or National Register of Historic Places, or is designated ~~or eligible for designation~~ as a Des Moines Landmark; or
2. It meets any of the ~~following~~ criteria established by City Code:
 - ~~(a) It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state, or local history;~~
 - ~~(b) It is associated with the life of a person that is important in the history of the community, City, state, or nation or who is recognized by local citizens for substantial contribution to the neighborhood or community;~~
 - ~~(c) It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style, or method of construction;~~
 - ~~(d) It is an outstanding or significant work of an architect, builder, designer, or developer who has made a substantial contribution to the art; and~~

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~~(e) It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.~~

3. Because of its location, age or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood, community, or the City, or because of its association with significant historical events or historic themes, association with important or prominent persons in the community or the City, or recognition by local citizens for substantial contribution to the neighborhood or the City.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails

PR 3.1 Encourage the planning, development, and full utilization of trails as recreation facilities.

PR 3.1.1 Plan urban trail systems for maximum pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, schools, transit centers, business districts, and employment areas as an alternative to automobile access. Also, plan trail systems that link to adjoining communities and urban areas leading to rural or natural areas.

PR 3.1.2 Develop ~~specific~~ plans for trails to be used as guides in creating coordinated recreation and transportation systems for pedestrian and all non-motorized vehicles or forms of transportation.

PR 3.1.3 Key pedestrian and bicycle routes should be those identified by the *Des Moines Comprehensive Transportation Plan*- Chapter 5 Pedestrians and Bicyclists.

Joint Use of Facilities

PR 4.1 Encourage joint use for recreation wherever lands and facilities are suitable and committed to other private and public purposes, including City, county/state properties, utilities rights-of-way, and the property of institutions and private corporations.

PR 4.1.1 ~~Establish~~Encourage joint-use recreational facilities while ensuring recreation services to the entire community. Utilize school sites and public buildings for recreation, cultural, and service programs through establishing joint purchase and/or use agreements.

PR 4.1.2 Develop specific agreements and reciprocal no-fee policies that encourage park use by school groups and school use by recreation user-groups of all ages, as appropriate.

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PR 4.1.3 Encourage use of local park and recreation facilities for a wider range of community services delivery (e.g., health information, consumer protection, nutrition, art and cultural activities, seniors, childcare, bookmobiles, playmobiles, etc.).

Park Operations and Maintenance

PR 5.1 Develop and maintain a maintenance management program using best management practices that identify preventative maintenance, remedial maintenance, and deferred maintenance programs for parkland and facilities.

PR 5.1.1 Establish maintenance service programs that protect public property; preserve its value; ensure its intended use, life expectancy, safety, cleanliness, security, and appearance; and promote community pride, [as feasible](#).

PR 5.1.2 Establish maintenance service programs that encourage sustainability to: protect natural resources, reduce waste and maximize ~~recycle~~ [recycled](#) resources, minimize dependence on water and fertilizers, and include integrated pest management, as appropriate.

PR 5.1.3 Develop and maintain the appropriate park rules and regulations that serve the continuing need to ensure access, safety, law enforcement, environmental protection, and protection of park, open space, historic districts, public art, and recreational resources as public assets.

Recreation, Senior, Inclusive, Wellness and Cultural Programs and Services

PR 6.1 Provide cultural and recreation programs, wellness and social services that are responsive, inclusive, and aligned to community demographics. Provide programs and services which are both non-fee and user-fee based as appropriate to achieve a balance within a variety of recreational programs and services offered throughout the community.

PR 6.1.1 Promote or sponsor inclusive community events, family programs, and other social activities that serve special populations of the community.

PR 6.1.2 Develop and participate in joint cultural, recreation and wellness programs and social services interdepartmentally and interjurisdictionally with school districts, [the](#) pool Metropolitan Park District, law enforcement, arts and heritage agencies, human services agencies, tourism agencies, and other community groups and associations, as well as surrounding communities or neighborhoods within the local or sub-regional area, [as feasible](#).

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PR 6.1.3 Pursue joint-use and shared-cost opportunities such as: Interlocal agreements with other governmental agencies, collaborative opportunities with interdepartmental projects, public/private partnerships, and volunteerism to support, develop, and maintain new and existing community programs and services.

PR 6.1.4 Provide additional parks facilities and recreation programming that specifically caters to the needs of children and teenagers and provides safe and productive outlets for Des Moines youth to socialize and recreate, [when feasible](#).

PR 6.2 Provide appropriate and responsive recreation services through specific planning:

PR 6.2.1 Coordinate Parks, Recreation, and Senior Service department planning with other service providers including human services, health and wellness, cultural, arts and heritage organizations, schools, and law enforcement; coordinate park and facility planning with land-use planning in the City and surrounding communities or neighborhoods.

PR 6.2.2 Provide for inclusive recreation opportunities to meet the needs of special populations including those who are economically disadvantaged, physically challenged, and developmentally disabled in park facility planning, design, and program services, [when feasible](#).

PR 6.2.3 Conduct a demographics analysis and citizen participation and recreation preference surveys every 3-6 years to determine and/or adjust recreation needs data, [as needed](#).

PR 6.2.4 Encourage ongoing community input into the development and management of park facilities, programs, and services.

PR 6.2.5 Promote environmental education through interpretive signage, beach and critical area naturalist programs, and environmental improvement volunteerism programs sponsored by the City, ~~and~~ other educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.

PR 6.2.6 Promote historical and cultural education through the preservation of historical sites and promotion of performing, literary and visual arts, community festivals and special events that extol and promote the cultural and historical heritage of the City.

Economic Development and Tourism

PR 7.1 Enhance the economic health of Des Moines neighborhoods through parks, recreation and senior services facilities, and program planning and implementation:

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PR 7.1.1 Identify and increase opportunities for public access to the public shoreline of Puget Sound and the number and variety of recreational and cultural opportunities provided at waterfront parks and the Marina, [when feasible](#).

PR 7.1.2 Identify and utilize growth management related impact fees, Lodging Tax and tourist related revenues and/or voted levy assessments in order to fund projects that are identified by the public as needed. Both public and private revenue sources will be employed to achieve a balance of equity and cost to the taxpayer through increased private and non-profit participation in recreation service activity.

PR 7.1.3 Make pedestrian-friendly improvements to rights-of-way with enhanced public spaces, landscaping, wayfinding directional and historical signs, public art, and pedestrian and bicycle pathways in a manner that encourages pedestrian interaction between neighborhoods, recreation facilities, schools, business areas, waterfront parks, Marina, and transportation links, [as appropriate](#).

PR 7.2 Identify appropriate and responsive use of city lodging tax for tourism purposes through specific planning:

PR 7.2.1 The Lodging Tax Advisory Committee will review and comment to City Council on any proposal for the imposition by the City of a Lodging Tax or any proposal for the increase in the rate of, repeal of, an exemption from, or change in the use of revenue received from Lodging.

PR 7.2.2 The comments shall include an analysis of the extent to which the proposal will accommodate activities for tourists or increase tourism, and the extent to which the proposal will affect the long-term stability of the fund created under RCW 67.28.1815.

PR 7.2.3 Failure of the Advisory Committee to submit comments before final action on or passage of the proposal shall not prevent the city from acting on the proposal. The City is not required to submit an amended proposal to an advisory committee under this section.

HUMAN SERVICES

PR ~~98~~.1 Provide appropriate and responsive Human Services through Specific Planning:

PR 8.1.1 ~~Human Services~~[An](#) Advisory Committee will ~~represent the interest of the City in matters of Human Services and~~ keep the City Council informed on all such related matters.

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PR 8.1.2 Evaluate each human services grant application using a standard rating tool.

PR 8.1.3 Allocate Human Services grants funding based on established city priorities:

- Priority One: -Those services that help meet basic and emergency needs (food, safety, shelter, medical, dental, mental health care, and clothing)
- Priority Two: -Programs which are preventative in nature and promote healthy, violence-free families and self-dependence.
- Priority Three: -Programs which seek to maintain and enhance the quality of life in persons whose basic needs are already met.

PR 8.1.4 Recommend to the City Council a level of funding for each accepted grant application.

PR 8.1.5 Ensure accountability of funded agencies with established service goals, required quarterly reports, and monitoring by the Committee.

Arts and Culture

PR 9.1 Provide appropriate and responsive cultural arts through specific planning:

~~PR 9.1.1 — The Arts Commission will represent the interest of the City in matters of the arts as the spokes group for the arts in the City and keep the City Council informed on all such related matters.~~

PR 9.1.¹² [An advisory committee will](#) evaluate, prioritize, and make recommendations on funding for cultural arts needs within the City.

PR 9.1.²³ Review and recommend works of art for the City. Local artists will be encouraged and given equal consideration for these projects.

PR 9.1.³⁴ Inform, assist, sponsor, or coordinate with arts [including performing arts](#), organizations, artists, or groups interested in cultural opportunities for our diverse community.

PR 9.1.⁴⁵ Encourage arts programs that celebrate cultural enrichment and the diversity of Des Moines.

PR 9.1.⁵⁶ Support accessibility and visibility of the arts.

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PR 9.1.~~67~~ Collaborate with schools, local, regional, state, and national arts organizations.

PR 9.1.~~78~~ ~~Obtain~~ Apply for private, local, regional, state, or federal funds to sustain the arts within the Des Moines community.

~~PR 9.1.9 — Cultivate interested citizens passionate about the arts for Arts Commission leadership and volunteerism.~~

Healthy Community

PR 10.1 Champion the Healthy Des Moines Movement through policy, systems, and environmental changes that result in increased access to healthy foods and beverages and opportunities for physical activity, with an emphasis on school-age children:

PR 10.1.1 Provide fresh food and unsweetened beverage options in City-sponsored meetings and promote healthy eating and nutritional education in City recreational programs to promote lifelong healthy eating habits, when feasible.

PR 10.1.2 ~~Provide K-fit, established~~ Support -active recreation standards and lifelong fitness education in City-sponsored youth recreational programs to promote active living habits, as appropriate.

PR 10.1.3 Identify City parklands as possible locations for community gardens, fruit and/or vegetable stands, farmer's markets, and Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) distribution sites to improve access to fresh food. Community gardens located in City parkland should be considered a non-commercial land use and subject to park land use guidelines.

PR 10.1.4 Support joint-use agreements for the use of publicly owned property and joint-program agreements with public and private agencies to increase opportunities for lifelong active living and healthy eating programming and education.

PR 10.1.5 Support funding of human services agencies that promote healthy communities including nutritional, mental, physical, and social health services.

PR 10.1.6 Provide volunteer opportunities that support building healthy communities.

Funding

PR 11.1 Evaluate the ~~E~~stablishment of a -Parks and Recreational Facilities Impact Fees for "park and facilities system improvements" necessary due to growth based on the

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development's proportionate share of system improvements that are reasonably related to the new development. Public park, waterfront, and recreational facility improvements located at the development site should be encouraged.

PR 11.2

Identify and utilize alternative funding programs administered by Tourism Program Areas, local, state, and federal agencies, or other public or private sources that are in the form of grants, loans, or other funding mechanism, when feasible.